No. 9. *On Female Diſcretion.*

Prov. chap 11. v. 22. "As a Jewel of Gold in a Swine's Snout, ſo is a Fair Woman without Diſcretion."

Much need has the Fairer Part of the Creation for cautionary advice, in this gay and diſſipated age. It is not like the age of our anceſtors, when ſtiff and rigid virtue was the pride and ornament of the female ſex. The misfortune is, that, in refining and ſoftening down the manners of former times, we have loſt a great part of that Virgin Purity, which was once the characteriſtic of the Chriſtian world. In acquiring elegance and eaſe, we have been taught to tread back the ſteps of virtue, almoſt to a ſtate of nature; and in teaching our Females Grace and Modern Manners, we have tinctured their minds with Impurity, and made them acquainted with thoſe artificial charms only, as captivate the licentious and the wanton.

Well may we deplore the degeneracy of the times! Well may we complain of the modern world! Though in the higheſt ſtate of civilization, our minds have wandered back to the dark ages of Barbariſm. The wit and gaiety of good breeding Now, conſiſts in laughing virtue out of countenance; and we labour to wear the face of Savage Nature. The Young men of the preſent age, brought up in the School of Vice, look on the ſofter ſex through a diſcoloured medium;--ſee no lovelineſs in that eye that withdraws

itself from admiration, and that modesty of countenance that is the perfection of female beauty---consider blushing as a mark of conscious wrong, and are pleased only with the indirect Ogle, the seducing Glance, and wanton Leer, Arts that grace those women only who, hackneyed in the ways of life, conceive that female accomplishments consist in unrestrained freedom, and falling in with the impure ideas of the libertine.

These may be Fashionable manners, but they are not Christian ones; which, according to St. Paul, require, that "Women adorn themselves in Modest apparel, with Shamefacedness, and Sobriety; not with plaited hair, with gold and pearls, and costly array." Beauty is that fascinating power which the Creator has given to the female sex, to captivate and charm the male. But Beauty, too much exposed, loses its effect; as that diamond is most admired whose brilliancy is only accidentally noticed. In like manner, Beauty, without Discretion, without that ornamental principle, is like a gem exposed to the broad glare of the mid-day sun. It is "a Jewel of Gold in a Swine's Snout;" a pearl, ill-placed, and little noticed. Would you, my Fair Hearers, wish to be settled in life with the partner of your heart, with him whom you esteem and love; it must be with him who knows the value of Discretion---the high estimation of Virgin Innocence, and the intrinsic worth of Purity of Heart---he who is guided by Reason, and governed by Honour. With Such a man, in Such a union, you may expect to be happy, and enjoy true connubial bliss; but if your attractions are aimed only at the unthinking and dissipated man, you must expect only in wedlock, remorse, sorrow, and wretchedness.

There is an innate dignity in female virtue, that, if properly applied, will awe the moſt abandoned libertine. True female delicacy is approached with Fear. If the women knew their power over our ſex, and felt their own conſequence, they would improve this quality to the utmoſt--they would not relax where they ought to be reſerved; and, though I execrate the ſtarched and affected prude, I would by no means have them give way to the depravity of the age, humour the fantaſies of the men, indulge their capriciouſneſs, at the expence of their own good ſenſe, and dreſs, ſo as to excite emotions that ought to be ſuppreſſed; but exalt themſelves in the eyes of their admirers, by giving dignity to grace, and ſanctity to elegance; and attire themſelves ſo as to captivate by its Modeſty, its Simplicity, and its Neatneſs.

It is too much the mode of the preſent day, for the men to attach themſelves to thoſe raſh young women who will cohabit with them, without marriage, and it may be worth our enquiry to ſearch into the cauſe of it. It certainly originates in the eaſe with which ſuch hapleſs maidens are to be had. The weakneſs, the over-fondneſs, the pride of parents, lead them to bring up their daughters in a better ſtyle of life than they are afterwards able to ſupport them in. Mothers, inſtead of keeping them at home, and under their own eye, are too apt to place them under the tuition of others, and mix them with girls of various diſpoſitions, where the More modeſt, aſſociating with thoſe that are Leſs ſo, and where unthinking and untutored minds do but corrupt each other; from whence they return with ſuch improper knowledge as tends only to make them eaſy ſacrifices to ſeduction. Women ſo educated, and loſt to that high ſenſe of honour that would protect them, look forward to indulgences

they cannot meet with at home, too readily liſten to the wiles of ſeducers, and truſt to Their mercy for ſupport.

Unhappy frail ones!---Much as you may impute your misfortune to ill-judging Parents, you owe it more to Yourſelves.--- Young as you are, your eyes were open to the world. The natural experience which grows with years, ſhould have taught you better. You ſhould have ſeen the pit before you; have adviſed with your friends and honourable connexions; looked forward to the conſequences of ſo raſh a ſtep, and not have haſtily plunged yourſelves into irrecoverable ruin. But, whilſt we condemn your Raſhneſs we compaſſionate your Weakneſs. We are ſenſible of the deceptions of our ſex--the many ſnares laid for your deſtruction--and, when added to this, we contemplate your want of experience, and your texture---the incautiouſneſs, the inconſiderateneſs, the gaiety and unſteadineſs of the infant mind---when we obſerve how much it is left to itſelf, and how much it is of courſe open to the arts of ſeducers---when we think of theſe things, our Cenſure ſoftens into Pity, and we wonder that the ſacrifice of virtue is not more often made!--How muſt the feeling mind then compaſſionate the hard lot of ſuch hapleſs females as fall victims to their own ſenſibility and the propenſities of nature!---Yet ſuch monſters are the men, as to triumph in their ſeduction, and often deſert them when they are friendleſs, and unable to help themſelves.

It is the Facility, I repeat, by which ſuch attachments are formed, that gives riſe to this evil; but let us hope that female Diſcretion may in time overcome it.---You, my honoured Siſters, who are ſtill happy in the poſſeſſion of what too many of your ſex lament the loſs of, take warning by the example of others, and

rather live a life of celibacy, than truſt to the mercy of thoſe who moſt probably would have No mercy for you; preſerve your ovn dignity and conſequence; ſhew an abhorrence of all improper conduct towards you; be wiſe---be Diſcreet---turn your backs on the licentious, and fall not in with the ſtream to do evil. We are taught by our religion not to countenance an evil act, nor encourage aught to wrong. Would you then conſider the conduct I recommend, as a Chriſtian duty, which in fact it is, the crime being one of thoſe ſins which, as St. Paul ſays, if perſiſted in, excludes from the kingdom of God: conſidered in this light, put the cenſure of the world out of queſtion, you would do well to take every opportunity of ſtemming the torrent, and teaching the libertine, that he ſhall not glory in his vices, unnoticed or uncondemned by You.

But the maid who winks at the looſe conduct of the men, who rather profeſſes herſelf an admirer of a man of gallantry; whoſe views are more to the Huſband than the Friend: She who is ever abroad in ſearch of what ſhe is not likely to find; who throws herſelf into public, in order to be noticed, and abſolutely dreſſes At the men:---in a word, the giddy female, who is in haſte to be married, is half undone; ſhe lays herſelf open to temptation, courts ſeduction, and, if ſhe has any exterior charms, meets her misfortunes half way. She is not avare that a fine face, veiled, excites admiration; whereas one ſeen often in public, is blown upon; and that a Forward Miſs is a diſguſtful character. She may ſerve to divert and amuſe, when the mind is not diſpoſed to be ſerious, but, in a man's thinking moments, ſhe is to him an object of ridicule and abhorrence.

It is the province of the ſofter ſex to be ſought out and courted,

and every one whose heart has been susceptible of that attachment, known by the name of Love, must know that difficulties, instead of Discouraging the passion, tend to Excite and Encourage it; that what is easily to be procured is not deemed worth the having; and that a fine form, too much exposed, fades in the eye, and palls upon the sense.--There is a bloom in virtue that sullies by disclosure; and would my fair audience pursue the direct road to connubial happiness, they will tread back those paths which indiscretion may have led them into, and veil their beauties from the broad glare of admiration.

Solomon's comparison is rather a coarse one, but it is, nevertheless, a Just one. "Beauty, without Discretion, is like a Jewel in a Swine's Snout." It is, as I have observed, a gem ill-placed, and instead of being admired, more likely to be buried in the mire, to be sullied, and prostituted, and as little regarded as would a diamond ring in the nose of a Sow, grubbing for food; and what more contemptible could be say of those female charms that, from the birth of time, have fascinated mankind, and in all ages and in all climes, have captivated the world?

Consider, ye fairest of the creation, the aim of this discourse.--- For Your sakes it was written, not for Ours. The Libertines of the age are too well Pleased to find That in you which Discretion and good sense must condemn; but if Such men are Pleased to find it, it Disgusts the rational and the good, those Very men in whose estimation you wish to rise. Besides, let a young woman have all the purity she may; let her thoughts and actions be as unsullied as her person; yet that want of Discretion we complain of, that Semblance of light character which she heedlessly puts on,

to avoid the name of Prude, and being considered as too reserved---that very Semblance, I say, may be her ruin. If she associates with improper persons of her Own sex, or the Libertines of ours---if she gives her company too readily to the men--if she is often seen alone with them---if she is too much in public---if she is forward in her manner, bold in her demeanor, loose in her attire, or too free with her tongue---she is Indiscreet, and this want of Discretion sullies her reputation, and gives a mortal stab to her character. 'Birds of a feather flock together!'--'Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you who you are.' These are maxims generally true, established by the experience of the world. Would you then be thought well of by the world;--Would you preserve those attractions which Nature has blessed you with;---Would you be the admiration of your Own sex, and the idols of Ours; be choice of yourselves; Select your company, be clean in your persons, neat and chaste in your dress, and circumspect in all your words and actions. In short, be Discreet. Remember that the female character is easily lost; and once lost, is seldom Regained; that Discretion is the basis of that happiness you look forward to; and that without it, 'a Fair Woman is but as a Jewel of Gold in a Swine's Snout.'

If then Want of Discretion is so Abominable in Single Life, how much worse so in a Married one, where a wife's happiness is centered in her husband's love? Every deviation, then, from the rule of right, is an advance towards her own wretchedness. Jealousy, in a married man, originates in love; and is a dread of losing any share in the affections of his wife. Wives of the present age, in order to make themselves agreeable in

company, will uſe unbecoming Freedom with their male acquaintance, conceiving, that what is conſtrued Gallantry, in its moſt favourable ſenſe, is a mark of vivacity, and faſhionable breeding; not conſidering that ſuch conduct tends to alarm their huſbands, and injure their characters in life. However the Libertine may be pleaſed with the freedom of other men's wives, he would condemn it in his own. Obſerve me, it is not neceſſary to be Demure, but true chaſtity is Meek, and bluſhes even at being admired. Let a married woman be ever ſo virtuous, and intentionally pure; yet, if to render herſelf pleaſing in the eyes of others, ſhe puts on the maſk of infidelity but for an hour; if ſhe aſſociates with ſuſpicious characters of her Own ſex, or throws herſelf in the way of the abandoned of Ours;---if ſhe is not perfectly chaſte in her words and actions;---if ſhe ſeems covetous of the company of men, or is often ſeen alone with them, though it May not be noticed by her Huſband, it Will be by the World; and that man whom ſhe is bound to love and reverence, May, finding his honour hurt by the world's cenſure of his wife, be brought at laſt to think ill of her Himſelf. Hence may ariſe Diſſatisfaction, Upbraidings, Quarrels, Hatred, and Separation, with all the concomitant Evils, Diſgrace, Remorſe, Wretchedneſs, and Ruin; and all this train of miſchief Probably from the want of Diſcretion.

To ſay that ſuch conduct is not Criminal is talking idly; St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to Titus, ſays, 'Wives ſhould be Diſcreet, chaſte, keepers at home, good, and obedient to their huſbands, that the word of God be not blaſphemed;' meaning, that the

laws of God may not be broken; an oppofite conduct being a breach of thofe laws.

The Seventh Commandment, that forbids Adultery, forbids every thing that has the leaft tendency towards it. Immodeft Words or Geftures, all Indelicacy, Double Entendres, or Equivocal Expreffions Words or Actions, Lightnefs of Character, Forwardnefs, Levity, nay Indifcretion. Our Saviour's explication of this law fhews us that the Intention is as criminal as the Act.--- 'Whofoever Looketh on a woman, to luft after her, hath committed Adultery (fays he) With her, already, in his heart.'

Vain then is the plea, that fuch conduct is but innocent freedom! I have fhewn you, my fair country-women, its danger, and not only the Danger but the Sin. A Spirit of Retaliation will be no excufe; for whatever examples are fet before you; however guilty your hufbands may be of a fimilar behaviour, Remember, that 'every man muft bear his Own burthen,' and be refponfible for his Own mifconduct. The crimes of Another will be no plea for You.

A word or two more and I have done. In the courfe of my obfervations on this fubject, I have pointed out, my fair hearers, the neceffity of your avoiding improper company, even of your Own fex; let me not however urge you to unkindnefs, or encourage uncharitable furmifes. Be cautious whom you cenfure; but, knowing your cenfure to be juft, be circumfpect, be Difcreet.---I would have your Benevolence as confpicuous as your Attractions. The tendernefs and foftnefs of your nature, will lead you to Pity the Offender, whilft you condemn the Offence, and in Execrating the Sin, to have fome Mercy for the Sinner; 'Be ye

therefore merciful, (fays our Saviour) as your Father in Heaven alſo is merciful.' When the woman taken in adultery was brought before him, to ſee whether he would order her to be ſtoned to death, according to the law of Moſes, he pauſed and ſaid, 'He that is Without ſin among you, let Him caſt the firſt ſtone at her.'--- To Err is human.---Great allowances are to be made for the ſenſibility and pliancy of the female frame. When we reflect on their guileleſs and incautious nature, the bewitching enchantment of a fine form, and finer face, that lays them open to temptation, and the wiles of ſeducers, we may rather wonder at the ſtand they make, than at their occaſionally falling; at leaſt your Cenſure ſhould be tempered with Mercy, and you ſhould look on them only as the hapleſs Beacons, held out to prevent your own Shipwreck. Be charitably diſpoſed towards them---do them all the good you can--triumph not in their misfortunes, nor conceive yourſelves better women, or better Chriſtians; but thank God that ſuch temptations have not been thrown in your way, or admitting they have, that you have been enabled to reſiſt them. Let us pray, that what they ſuffer in This life, may be, through Chriſt, accepted as a ſufficient atonement for their offences; and thus purged of their ſins, through the merits of our Redeemer, they may be everlaſtingly happy in the Next!---May this be the bleſſed ſtate of us all!---Amen!

Truſler. A Manuſcript.